

Charles D. Baker  
Governor

Karyn Polito  
Lieutenant Governor

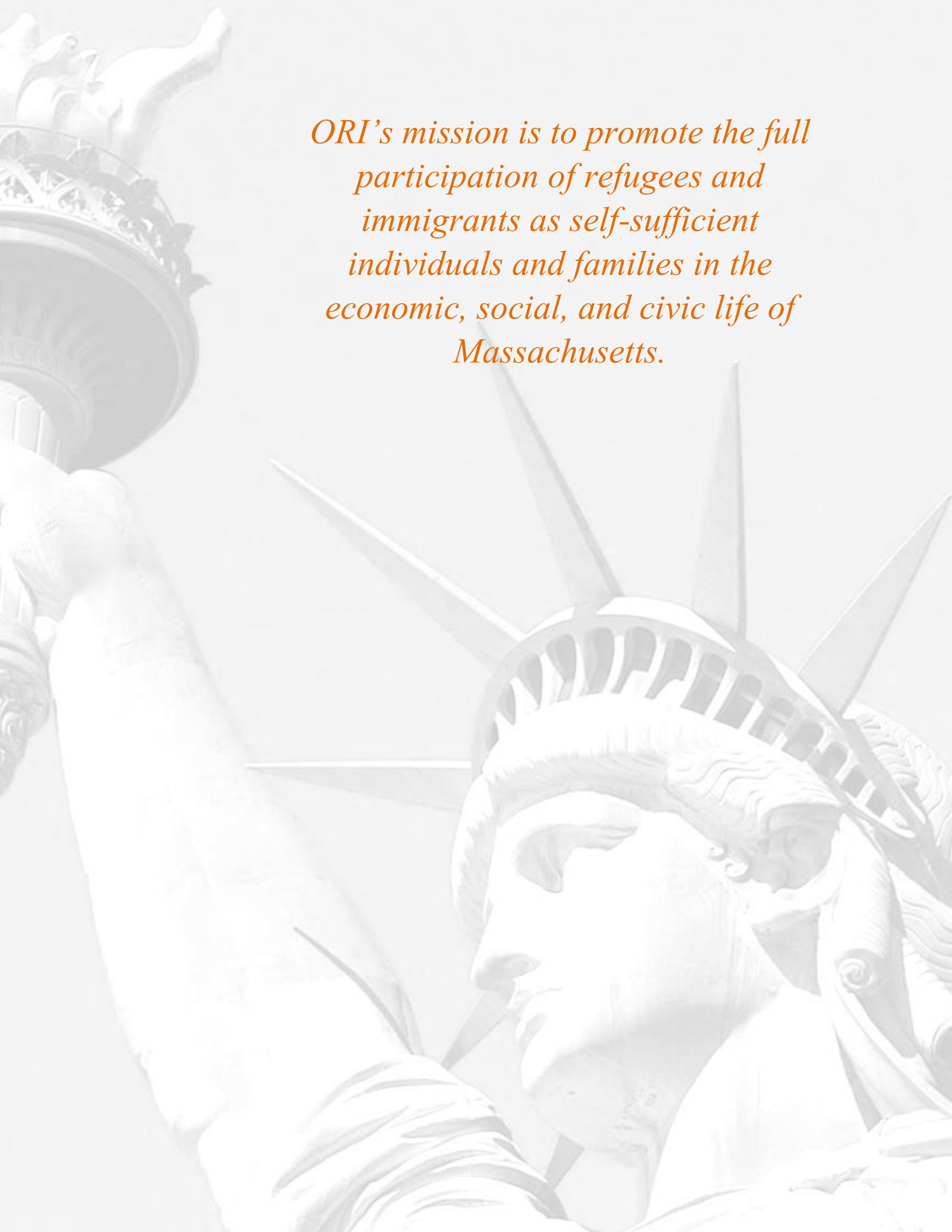


Marylou Sudders  
Secretary

Mary Truong  
Executive Director




# Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI) Annual Report 2015

A faded, grayscale background image of the Statue of Liberty, showing the crown and face of the statue, with rays of light emanating from the crown.

*ORI's mission is to promote the full participation of refugees and immigrants as self-sufficient individuals and families in the economic, social, and civic life of Massachusetts.*

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A large American flag is shown waving in the wind against a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The flag is positioned on the left side of the frame, with its stars and stripes clearly visible. The overall tone of the image is patriotic and uplifting.

*“...in my mind it was a tall proud city built on rocks stronger than oceans, wind-swept, God-blessed, and teeming with people of all kinds living in harmony and peace, a city with free ports that hummed with commerce and creativity, and if there had to be city walls, the walls had doors and the doors were open to anyone with the will and the heart to get here.”*

*- Ronald Reagan*

Dear Friends,

As the Executive Director of the Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI), it is a privilege for me to share the Office for Refugees and Immigrants' first 2015 Annual Report. I would like to thank Governor Charlie Baker, Lt. Governor Karyn Polito, and Executive Office of Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders, service providers, ORI staff and our supporters for their immeasurable contributions to the mission of the state Refugee Resettlement Program we administer, and for their support of refugees and immigrants. We've accomplished a lot during the past year as you'll see in the forthcoming pages.



The mission of ORI is profound, and one that personally impacts me. As a former refugee from Vietnam, I learned firsthand that adapting to a new country can be a tremendous challenge. As a teenager I was faced with learning a new language, adopting a foreign way of life and becoming familiar with unfamiliar customs. My family required significant supports and we were fortunate to receive help from many directions - our government institutions, local refugee resettlement agencies and sponsors, and our newfound community. With support and many hours of hard work, my family was able to become self-sufficient and truly achieve our own version of the American dream. ORI cannot fulfill its mission without your support and collaboration. Both ORI and our refugees and immigrants are forever grateful for your kindness and generosity.

I invite you to learn more about ORI, the people we reach and our partner organizations. I wholeheartedly extend a personal invitation to you to welcome newcomers as they strive to become an integral part of our society and work toward contributing to our neighborhoods, schools, civic organizations and economy. I am confident they will add to the rich fabric of life here in Massachusetts. Let us do this important community building work together.

Thank you and I look forward to continuing our wonderful partnership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary Truong'.

Mary Truong  
Executive Director



Since 1985, The Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI) has been at the forefront of supporting the effective resettlement of refugees and immigrants in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. ORI has worked diligently to foster a public environment that recognizes and supports the ethnic and cultural diversity of the state.

This report highlights the shifting demographics, strategic partnership and outputs, and the notable accomplishments of the agency for Federal fiscal year 2015 (October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015). This has been an exciting year; we welcomed more than 1,700 people from various countries, including Bhutan, Iraq, and Somalia. We provided dollars to ensure meals to homebound refugee seniors; we witnessed the growth of refugee-owned businesses, and so much more. ORI prioritizes three overarching strategic priorities; these are citizenship, education, and refugee workforce development.

**Citizenship:** The journey from a new country to becoming an engaged citizen isn't simple, and we collaborate with key partners to bring the American Dream closer to a reality for newcomers. This year our efforts reached approximately 2,000 individuals seeking citizenship.

**Education:** Access to education for youth is at the core of our services. ORI works collaboratively with ethnic community-based organizations and school districts, licensed foster care providers, and group homes, to foster the growth of youth to their fullest potential. We served more than 500 youth in tutoring, test preparation, and English language learning in this last year alone. Additionally, 170 at-risk refugee youth were provided with foster care, medical care, and behavioral health supports.

**Workforce:** Through ORI programming, refugees have been able to obtain English language instruction and vocational training, access to childcare supports, as well as overcome other critical barriers to help ensure their overall successes. During this year more than 1,200 refugees obtained jobs, and many exceed an hourly wage of \$10.00.

The coming year, ORI's emphasis will be on expanding supports available to newcomers and enhancing community and public engagement. We aim to look more closely at activities that enhance citizenry, build skills, and build community of both the newcomer and native born alike. This will occur via the implementation of several exciting initiatives; an informative and multilingual **Welcome Kit**; a culturally and linguistically appropriate **Financial Literacy for Newcomers** program, and a **Provider Directory** to ensure access to statewide service providers.

There are a variety of opportunities to help refugee and immigrant newcomers in our state, and we hope you will be a beacon of support. You can provide monetary supports to our providers working directly with newcomers; help ensure safe and accessible housing to refugee tenants looking to rent and make Massachusetts their home; or support employment opportunities by hiring hardworking refugee and immigrant individuals.

In 1985, the Massachusetts Office of Refugee Resettlement was created by MA Executive Order. In 1992, the MA State Legislature statutorily established the MA Office for Refugees and Immigrants. ORI serves as the state refugee coordinator's office, and its primary responsibility is to administer the federally-funded refugee resettlement program in the Commonwealth.

*The mission of ORI is to*

**support** *the effective resettlement of refugees and immigrants in the state;*

**promote** *full participation of refugees and immigrants in the economic, civic, social and cultural life of the Commonwealth; and*

**foster** *a public environment that recognizes and supports the ethnic and cultural diversity of the state.*

Claude is a **refugee** from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and was resettled by Refugee and Immigrant Assistance Center (RIAC) in Worcester at the end of 2014. He came with his wife and young son. Claude speaks English, French, and four other African languages well. Soon after his arrival he offered to **volunteer** at the refugee resettlement agency twice a week.

Despite challenges, including a very harsh first winter in 2014, Claude dutifully assisted with refugee resettlement in numerous ways. Claude served other new refugee families by acting as an interpreter and by moving furniture to prepare apartments for newly arriving refugees. He supported refugee resettlement in any way he could by helping RIAC with various office and administrative tasks. Claude is very committed, hardworking, and interested in helping other refugees start a life in Worcester.



With the support of RIAC, Claude obtained a **UMass Memorial scholarship** for a medical interpretation program and will receive his certificate for medical interpreting in the near future. Claude has been **hired** to work as a regional **Community Health Worker** in Worcester.

Each year Massachusetts serves approximately **2,400 new individuals**

through the Massachusetts Refugee Resettlement Program. During federal fiscal year 2015,

**1,774 new refugees** and **331 new individuals** with other

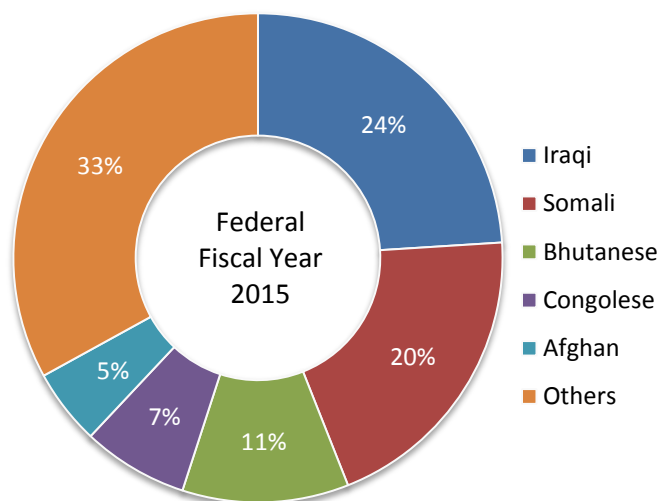
qualifying immigration statuses were served.

<p><i>Groups eligible for ORI-administered federally-funded refugee benefits and services:</i></p> <p><b>Refugee:</b> A person who cannot return to his or her country because of well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. A refugee receives this status before entering the U.S.</p> <p><b>Asylee:</b> A person who meets the definition of refugee, and who is already within the U.S. when he/she applies for and receives asylum. His/her immediate family may be granted derivative asylee status overseas.</p> <p><b>Cuban/Haitian Entrant:</b> A national of Cuba or Haiti who has been granted parole status, or has applied for asylum, or is in removal proceedings.</p> <p><b>Certain Amerasians from Vietnam:</b> Children born in Vietnam between 1962 and 1976, fathered by a U.S. citizen.</p> <p><b>Certified Victim of a Severe Form of Trafficking:</b> A person who, through force, fraud or coercion, has performed a commercial sex act; or who has been recruited or transported for or provided forced labor, and who has been certified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.</p> <p><b>Certain Afghan &amp; Iraqi Special Immigrants</b> who were employed by or on behalf of the U.S. Government.</p>	<p><b>Federal Fiscal Year 2015</b></p> <p><b>86%</b> 1,801 new individuals</p> <p><b>6%</b> 131 new individuals</p> <p><b>5%</b> 97 new individuals</p> <p><b>0%</b> 0 new individuals</p> <p><b>0%</b> 8 new individuals</p> <p><b>3%</b> 68 new individuals</p>
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Each year Massachusetts welcomes individuals from more than **25 countries** and during recent years the largest refugee populations have been from **Iraq, Somalia, and Bhutan.**

The **age groups** of newly arriving populations served under the Massachusetts Refugee Resettlement Program has remained unchanged over the past few years. 9% are 0 to 4 years of age. 24% are 5 through 17 years of age. 65% are 18 through 64 years of age. 2% are 65 years and over.



The balance of resettlement between **regions** in Massachusetts has remained steady with approximately 49% of new arrivals resettling in Eastern MA, 23% in Central MA, and 28% in Western MA. Predominant **cities** include Boston (11%), Lowell (15%), Lynn (11%), Springfield (10%), West Springfield (10%), and Worcester (24%); with other Massachusetts cities also receiving newly arriving individuals (19%). A city's percentage of statewide resettlement adjusts slightly each year.

During federal fiscal year **2016** Massachusetts is projected to receive between 1,750 and 1,925 overseas refugee arrivals. Local Refugee Resettlement Agencies expect that the demographic breakdowns of country of origin and age will be similar to previous years.

Through both federal and state funding, employment services provide integrated assistance, including targeted services leading to both early and long-term economic self-sufficiency, employment-related case management, English language instruction, employment readiness, vocational skills development and training, job placement, and employment retention supports.

Abdulmohsin (Mike) came to the U.S. from Iraq in late 2013. *"I didn't know anything about this country," he says.*



*Abdulmohsin received assistance from his case manager and from an employment specialist. He learned about working in the American workplace through attending employment-based ESOL classes. The Russian Community Association of Massachusetts (RCAM) found Abdulmohsin a job at Medtronic, a biomedical engineering company.*

*Photo courtesy of Russian Community Association of Massachusetts. Abdulmohsin's picture in the middle.*

*"The company I work for is very important because I feel like I am saving people. I work with a focus because quality is very important at Medtronic. Everyone works there is happy. The supervisor and team leaders all respect each other. Every day, we have a team meeting and we talking about respect. I can always share my ideas with my team leaders. So far, I've suggested two ideas about safety precautions and package scanning that my team took under consideration. Then they used my ideas to help make our job more safe and productive."*

Federal fiscal year **2015 accomplishments**

**70%** of active caseload obtained employment.

The **hourly wage** is over \$10.00 an hour.

Employment **retention** has averaged at 86% over the past two years.

**Cash Assistance Terminations** increased by 20% due to employment income.

204 refugee clients received financial assistance to access **Skills Trainings** and Driver's Education Training. 78% obtained their Driver's Permit.

20% accessed trainings in the Health Industry.

2% completed various Trades Training courses.

ORI has strategic statewide oversight of

## **two programs** for refugee youth

and young adults: *the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM)*, and *Refugee School Impact (RSI)*. The two programs aim to increase opportunities for minors to better reach their potential as newcomers to the United States, and Massachusetts in particular. Both programs exist on a national level. The URM was originally developed on a national level in the 1980s to address the



needs of thousands of children from Southeast Asia without a parent or guardian to care for them. In Massachusetts, the program was initiated in 1996 and is a collaborative effort between ORI and the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families.

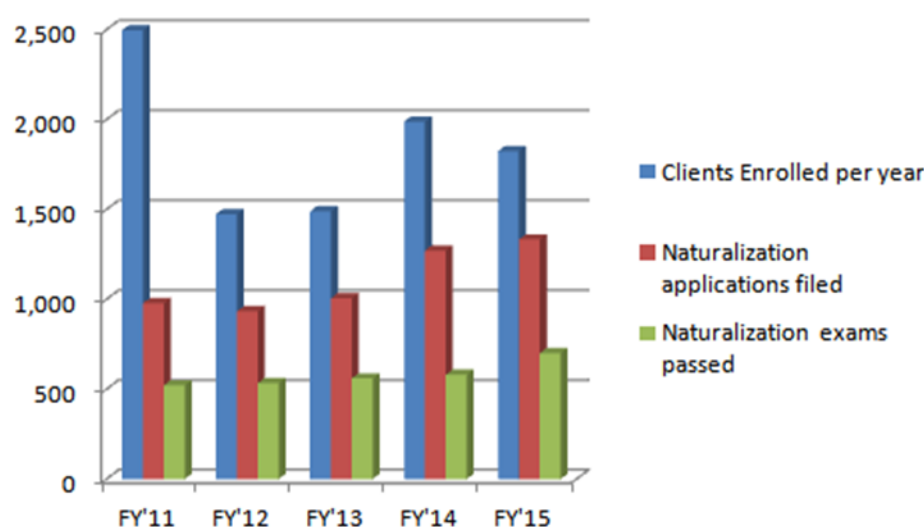
**The Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM):** Youth have unique obstacles specific to their family structure. They often are fleeing from dire circumstances, and arrive in the country of resettlement without an adult family member. The program was able to reach, engage, house and protect **more than 170 minors during 2015**.

Through ORI's network of caretakers, the URM program helps youth develop appropriate skills to enter adulthood and to achieve social self-sufficiency. Children were placed in licensed foster homes, and other licensed care settings according to their individual needs, such as therapeutic foster care, group homes, residential treatment centers, and independent living programs.

**The Refugee School Impact (RSI):** It addresses the impact of refugee children on local public school districts by identifying and addressing gaps in services to this population, an activity conducted in partnership between refugee service providers and local school districts. The program provides services relative to the needs of refugee children and their families. Last year, the RSI program **successfully reached 500+ young people** around the state. African Community Education Program (ACE), one of ORI's

grantees, is located in Worcester and offers out of school programs reaching children and young adults from ages 10-19, most hailing from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Ethiopia. Newcomer youth received supplemental educational programming; and participated in workshops related to emerging leadership, model citizenship and justice, Geographic Information System (GIS) computer mapping; and healthy relationships.

The purpose of the **Citizenship for New Americans Program (CNAP)** is to enable low-income lawful permanent residents in MA to become naturalized citizens of the U.S. Citizenship bestows upon foreign-born individuals the right to **participate fully in civic and economic life in the U.S.** Due to the complexity of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) naturalization process—which requires English language proficiency, basic knowledge of U.S. history and civics, accurate completion of the citizenship application form and a successful interview with a USCIS official—many eligible individuals require assistance to accomplish the goal of becoming naturalized citizens of this country. ORI funds a network of community-based organizations to provide English language and civics classes, application assistance, interview preparation and additional support services to aspiring applicants around the state.



During this program year (July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015), CNAP participants had a variety of successes that include:

- 1,824 participants on average received valuable supports leading towards citizenship,
- 1,333 participants received application assistance to begin their paths to becoming citizens;
- **700 participants became citizens** in the last year.

#### Upcoming Year

ORI intends to capitalize on the successes and increase reach to underserved populations. Strategically, we will work in areas where there are little to no citizenship assistance resources and aim to fund and support organizations that promote citizenship services.

## Welcome Kit for Refugees

ORI provides a Welcome Kit to every newly arrived refugee to both demonstrate support, and introduce essential information about local services available. The Welcome Kit for Refugees is a document organizer that contains: a welcoming letter signed by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and EOHHS Secretary, a phone number card for important public services, and an information sheet that explains these services in targeted refugee languages.

## Financial Literacy for Newcomers

Given our mission is to promote the full participation of refugees and immigrants as self-sufficient individuals and families in the economic, social, and civic life of Massachusetts, we recognize that a hallmark of self-sufficiency is the capacity to make informed financial decisions. Yet newcomer populations often face unique obstacles with regard to achieving financial proficiency, including but not limited to language and literacy, financial customs in the country of origin, and the complexity of the American banking system. To address these obstacles and capitalize on the merits and strengths newcomers bring, ORI has proposed the Financial Literacy for Newcomers (FLN) program.

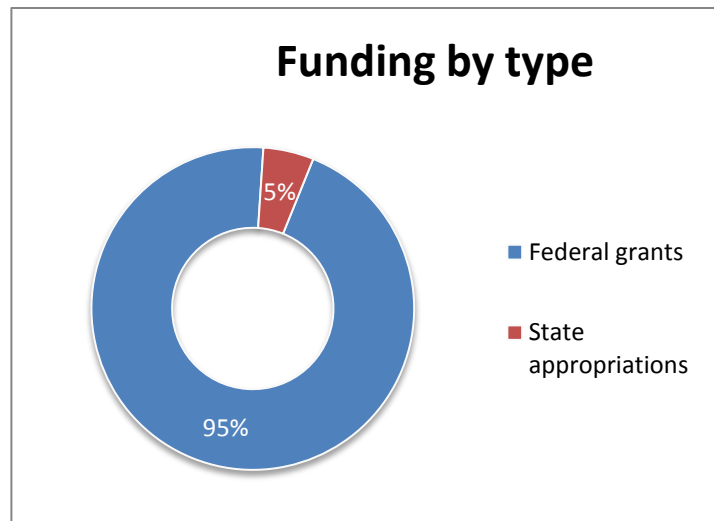
The Financial Literacy for Newcomers (FLN) program aims to build stronger bonds among existing financial institutions and develop educational initiatives which target the specific needs of newcomers. Specific objectives include:

- (1) Orientation of refugees and immigrants to financial institutions' portfolio of services;
- (2) Development and delivery of culturally and linguistically appropriate financial information with a focus on basic personal finance, budgeting, avoiding scams, sending money to the home country (a.k.a. remittances), investing and retirement planning;
- (3) Enhanced collaboration and partnership between public and private partners to support local refugee and immigrant communities in understanding the importance of financial literacy.

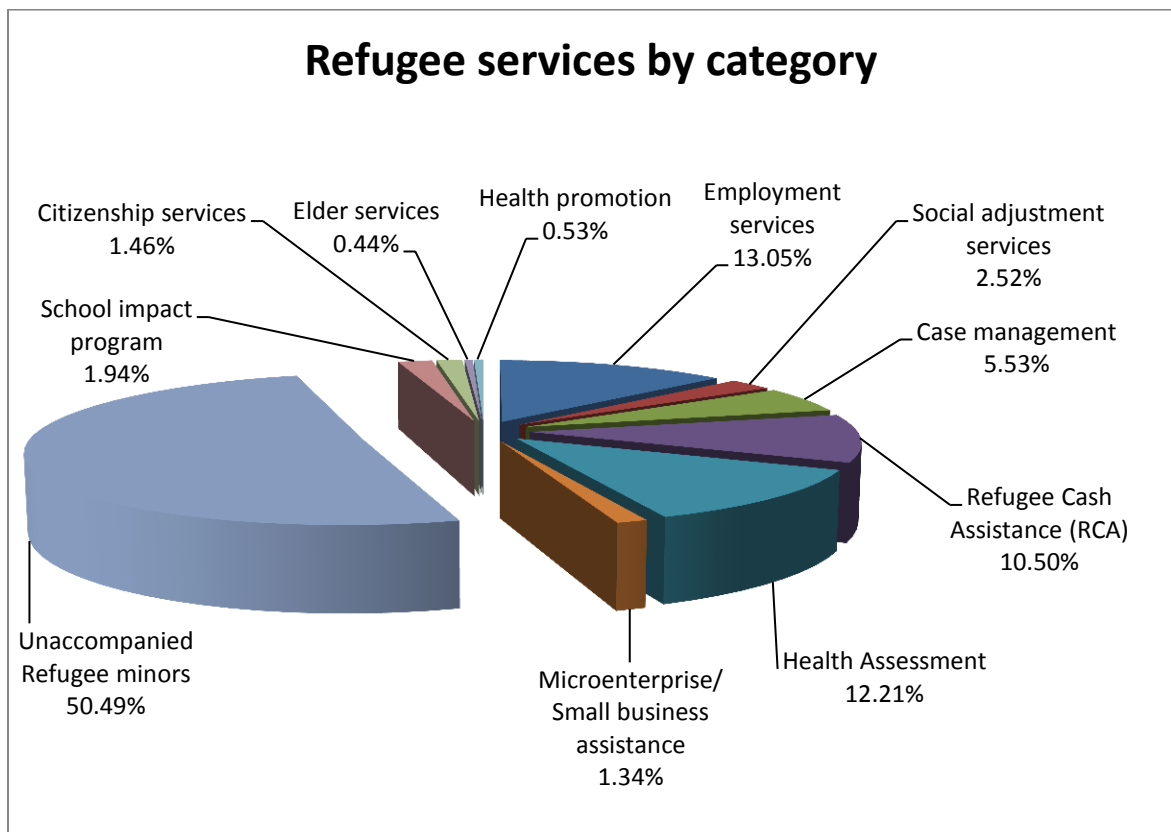
## Provider Directory

The Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants will issue a directory booklet detailing services provided by all ORI community partners. The booklet also will contain a description of ORI programs, a list EOHHS offices, and searchable indexes.

ORI is primarily funded through the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement which supports services for refugees. ORI receives limited state funding which supports citizenship and employment services to refugees and immigrants residing in the Commonwealth.



During federal fiscal year 2015 ORI administered 11 programs that provided direct services to clients through a network of refugee resettlement agencies (including faith-based organizations), and ethnic community-based organizations, which all have the capacity to serve the culturally and linguistically diverse needs of newcomer populations. In Federal fiscal year 2015, the ORI overall budget was \$21.4 M, with \$20.23M funded from federal grants and \$1.17 from state dollars.





# THANK YOU

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**ORI would like to thank the following partners in support of our work.**

Governor Charles Baker

Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito

Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) Secretary Marylou Sudders

Office of Refugee Resettlement, Administration for Families and Children

Executive Office of Elder Affairs

Governor's Advisory Council on Refugees and Immigrants

MA Commission for the Blind

MA Department of Children and Families

MA Department of Early Education and Care

MA Department of Elementary & Secondary Education

MA Department of Public Health

MA Department of Transitional Assistance

MA Department of Youth Services

MassHealth

ORI Staff

ORI volunteers and supporters

Refugee Service Providers

The Office of the State Treasurer/ Office of Economic Empowerment

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services

Charles Baker, Governor  
Karyn Polito, Lieutenant Governor  
Marylou Sudders, Secretary  
Mary Truong, Executive Director



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## ***MASSACHUSETTS OFFICE FOR REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS***

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For more information or to download this Annual Report – visit

***[www.mass.gov/ORI](http://www.mass.gov/ORI)***

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